(g) if so, the details of the challanges that Navy is facing?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (g) Government has approved the indigenous construction of a 37,500 Metric Tons Air Defence Ship (ADS) at Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), Kochi, for the Indian Navy. The initial approval was for a carrier of 24,000 Metric Tons. In view of the strategic importance and role of the ADS, the capacity was increased.

A contract for procurement of special quality steel from M/s Steel Authority of India Limited for the construction of ship has been signed and steel was cut on 11th April, 2005 marking the commencement of production of the ADS.

Contracts have been signed by Cochin Shipyard Limited, Kochi with M/s Fincantieri, an Italian shipyard, for undertaking design, integration, installation and commissioning of the propulsion system for the Air Defence Ship and for consultancy in detailed engineering and documentation. The naval design office has also successfully completed the structural design and the hull form for the platform.

Construction of ADS

4387. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the first indigenously designed 37,5000 tonnes heavy aircraft carriers, tentatively christened "Air Defence Ship" (ADS) is being built at Cochin shipyard;

(b) if so, the special features of the indigenous carriers *vis-a-vis* those deployed by other countries;

(c) the details of the cost involved and time schedule fixed for completion of the project; and

(d) the status of the similar heavy aircraft carriers already in use by the Indian Navy and the extent to which the new addition is expected to boost the Navy's aspiration for adequate power projection in the Indian Ocean region?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) Government have approved indigenous construction of an Air Defence Ship (ADS) of 37,500 Metric Tons for the Indian Navy at a cost of Rs. 2880 crore at Cochin Shipyard Ltd. The Construction of ADS is likely to be completed by 2011-2012. The ADS would be capable of performing the roles that most other aircraft carriers in the world are capable of.

Indian Navy is presently having one aircraft carrier *viz.* INS Viraat which is 45 years old. Though this carrier was originally scheduled for de-commissioning in 2007, efforts would be made to keep the platform operationally available until the ADS is inducted. With the induction of ADS, the capacity of the Navy to neutralise threats and initiate offensive action in support of land forces and in the execution of amphibious tasks would be enhanced.

Identity Cards for Illegal Migrants from Bangladesh

4388. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal to issue identity cards for the illegal migrants from Bangladesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the number of illegal migrants from Bangladesh as on 1st January, 2005; and

(d) whether Government are aware that the proposal to issue identity cards for these migrants, if under considration would met with stiff opposition in the country, particularly Assam and North-East?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) and (b) The Government is engaged in intra and inter-Ministerial consultations regarding the desirability and feasibility of issuance of Identity Cards to non-citizens as the matter has both administrative and legal implications.

(c) No firm estimates of illegal migrants from Bangladesh are available because they enter surreptitiously and are able to mingle easily with the local population due to ethnic and lingusitic similarities.